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QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Written statement submitted by Pax Romana a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[20 March 1996]

1. Pax Romana is extremely concerned about the dreadful situations which arise every day in countries such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia and many others owing to antipersonnel land-mines. These evil little devices, which some try to justify in the name of war, have ruined many families and still do so every day, and the harm is inflicted not only while the war or conflict lasts but for many years after it is finally over, when people are working hard to be reborn out of the ashes which irrationality has spread and try to carry on and achieve a minimum dignity in life.

2. Needless to say, children are the group most affected by antipersonnel land-mines in peacetime. They are the ones who too often pay a high price, namely the loss of limbs, etc., because of their innocence and naivety. This will determine their lives and those of their family members forever. One of our biggest concerns in how children are totally unprotected and highly threatened by antipersonnel land-mines. We share this concern with the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities,

as expressed in its resolution 1995/24. There are other people, civilians and military, youngsters and adults, women and men, who suffer such consequences and are tied to expensive and painful treatments forever more as well.

3. We want, here and now, to follow other NGOs in their call and actively join the campaign to ban land-mines all over the world. We cannot accept or understand how there can still be people who, with the sole view of making money, are producing, selling and exporting destruction and pain with impunity.

4. We welcome the fact that some countries have taken decisions to give support to an absolute ban on production of antipersonnel land-mines, but many more countries should do likewise.

5. The Spanish Council of Ministers adopted a decision on 8 March 1996 to impose an indefinite moratorium on exports of antipersonnel land-mines: all exports of non-detectable and non-self-destructing antipersonnel land-mines are totally banned, and exports are forbidden of any kind of antipersonnel land-mines to countries which are not party to the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its Protocol II. This decision is undoubtedly positive and it is a step forward but, at the same time, it generates some doubts and questions. Why does this moratorium not say anything about the production of land-mines? What is going to happen with the mines that are at present being produced in Spain? Why is all the information about it labelled "secret"? How is all this production monitored? Is it really monitored?

6. We would like the Spanish Government to be brave enough to act more clearly and conclusively and take a bigger step by joining the admirable group of countries mentioned above. It would be very good for Spain to follow other European Union countries which have already decided to call for a comprehensive ban on antipersonnel land-mines (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland), which will hopefully be followed by other States soon.

7. At the national level, greater transparency of information is desirable. What is happening (or what will happen) with the antipersonnel land-mines produced by Bressel, Explosivos Alaveses (EXPAL), Explosivos de Burgos (EDB), Fabricaciones Extremeñas (FAEX), Unión Española de Explosivos (UEE)? We are sure that these companies could use their efforts, money and technical and personnel potential for other purposes which are more humanitarian and useful than spoiling lives. We like to think that the companies' managements would not hesitate to give up producing antipersonnel land-mines if they received the support and help they need. This support can only be given by those who hold political and economic power in the country.

8. It is time to take this problem very seriously and to stop once and for all this madness: a further 100 million land-mines laid and waiting for a victim, a further 100 million land-mines stockpiled and ready for use, between 5 and 10 million new land-mines produced each year, 500 victims per week, 26,000 people per year. Every 20 minutes a mine maims or kills a person somewhere in the world. We would recommend that the Commission ratify the

declaration made by the Sub-Commission in paragraph 7 of resolution 1995/24 as regards a total ban on the production, marketing and use of antipersonnel land-mines.

9. We might not be able to prevent wars from taking place, unfortunately, but there is no need to make them worse than they actually are, especially when this means making them last so many decades after they are over by means of antipersonnel land-mines. In the world of war weapons, mines are among the vilest and most inhuman which can be used. We must finish with this right now.